

Chapter 2

Realizing Your Unlimited Potential

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hat keeps us from meeting our goals? Perhaps an even more important question is: What keeps us from realizing our unlimited potential, from reaching goals we don't even dare to set?

Many people settle for far less in life than they should. Their potential brain power so far outdistances the image they have of their own capabilities that they cannot even imagine what they can truly accomplish.

Anyone who has been a teacher knows that the most important part of teaching is not sharing information. It is helping students discover their capacity to learn. Once students discover this, they are not limited to just the information their teacher can share — all information is theirs for the taking.

If you have been present at the moment that a baby first walks, you have seen the magical moment when a person really feels the promise of his or her own potential. With the first successful steps, the baby shows to the world a facial expression shining with wonder ("Can I really do this?") and power ("Yes! I am doing this!").

And, of course, joy. What a joy it is to discover our personal potential.

Why People Don't Realize Their Potential

Yet if the process is so full of wonder, power and joy, why does it seem mysterious and difficult? Why are more people not realizing their potential?

The basic reasons are two. First, by the time we have reached adolescence, our habitual domain has been built by our childhood experiences and learning, by our environment, by our heredity and by all the other elements that go to make up the way we think.

Second, most people don't know much about the way the human brain is "programmed." They understand some fundamentals about how to add to their knowledge base — read, get information from other people, travel and observe — but they don't know much about how the brain uses that knowledge. And they don't know how to change patterns already in place in the brain.

They become accustomed to living inside the habitual domain they have already built. It's comfortable enough, in most cases. Furthermore, most people simply never realize that they have a habitual domain and that they can change its boundaries and enlarge it at will.

Alinsky's Experiment

A very telling example of how much most people stay within their own habitual domains is the story of social activist Saul Alinsky's experiment in downtown Los Angeles, trying to give away a \$10 bill. Without offering any explanation, he stood on a street corner, holding out a \$10 bill to the first five people who passed him. Not one took the money. They said,

"I have no change with me."

"I have no money on me."

"I'm not that kind of girl."

"I don't come that cheap."

"What kind of con game is this? If you don't go away, I will call the police."

In every case, the habitual domain of the passerby did not

include the idea that a man on a street corner might simply give away \$10, no strings attached.

If any one of them could have let this new idea into the habitual domain, he or she would have been \$10 richer in an instant.



When we have become adults and our habitual domains are pretty comprehensive — they cover most of our lives and go with us the way a turtle shell covers the turtle — expanding our habitual domains simply doesn't occur to most of us. The phrase in English that a person has "made up his mind" is very interesting to me as I think about habitual domains and the way the brain works. In a very real way, each of us has "made" up his mind, has built a way of thinking, literally, by establishing patterns in the brain.

These are called "circuit patterns," and learning about them is the key to changing your habitual domain at will.

Understanding and Changing Circuit Patterns

Our thoughts, concepts and ideas are represented by different **circuit patterns** in the brain. Just as the circuitry in a piece of electronic equipment is designed to perform a specific function within the device, so the circuit patterns in our brains allow us to retrieve and employ certain concepts, ideas or activities.

These circuit patterns are reinforced when the corresponding ideas are repeatedly used or rehearsed.

For example, let's say you are working on an assembly line screwing a certain nut onto a certain bolt as the product moves past you. Initially you will move slowly and hesitantly. You may drop the nut or your tools. You may strip the threads through incorrect placement of the nut. And you may only fulfill this task 25 times an hour while your more experienced co-workers do it 50 times an hour.

Circuit patterns are the actual templates of neural cells that are activated for every thought, idea or memory we have. These patterns can be created spontaneously and we can also program them purposely.



now what rehearsal
e mean to a sport

But over time your mind/body coordination improves. Before long you are doing the work naturally and almost without effort. You have established a circuit pattern for that particular activity, and it only becomes stronger with additional use.

We establish a new circuit pattern in our brain when we learn a new theory, fact or behavior. It's much like introducing a new program or piece of data into a computer.

Rehearsal and Practice

Rehearsal and practice are important in strengthening our circuit patterns. For Americans, the characters that make up the Chinese language are complex and incomprehensible. Yet the Chinese, because they have practiced them repeatedly since childhood, have established strong circuit patterns in their brains that make it easy for them to write and read these characters.

Penfield's Experiment

Circuit patterns can be physically observed. Wilder Penfield, a famous Canadian physician who specialized in brain surgery as a cure for epilepsy, made an intriguing discovery during one of his operations.

Before surgery, the doctor used a small electrode to touch parts of the patient's brain to determine whether they were affected by the irregular electrical discharges that characterize epileptic seizures.

On one occasion he touched the neurons at a patient's temple and triggered a particular memory. Remarkably, whenever the same amount of voltage was applied to the same part of the brain, the patient would vividly recall the same memory from his childhood. It was an incredibly detailed account of his playing with another child, a series of images containing information that the patient normally couldn't remember.



The incident proved that every memory is stored somewhere in our brains (in the potential domain) as patterns of neurons, or brain cues. As long as the neurons that form the

circuit pattern for that memory remain alive, we can retrieve the information with the appropriate stimulus.

Circuit patterns can be built or made stronger by repetition. When you practice or rehearse a thought process (or a skill like playing the piano, or a physical activity like jumping rope, for that matter), the corresponding circuit pattern becomes stronger.

Have you learned to type? If so, you know that repetition and practice are essential. You have to practice every day to master typing.

In fact, even when you're not at the keyboard you may find yourself mentally typing, breaking down words into letters and, in your mind, using the appropriate finger to tap the appropriate typewriter key.

In the process you are establishing stronger circuit patterns.

As a boy in Taiwan I learned to perform mathematical computations on an abacus. I practiced daily, and after a while I was able to do computations in my head, simply by imagining an abacus in my mind.

Ideas and the Operators That Change Them

Information, or an arriving event, is programmed in our brains in circuit patterns. Neurologists who have experimented with primates show us that these patterns are as observable as lighted circuitry on electronic devices. Neurons activate or "light up" in some chartable patterns, patterns that are seemingly identical every time the behavior is repeated, the thought is thought, or the memory is recalled.

We possess two essential kinds of circuit patterns. These are **ideas** and **operators**.

Ideas are essentially static, or set in a lasting pattern. For example, it's unlikely that a person's memories of a peak event, say a wedding day, are going to change. They are more or less fixed.

Or consider numbers. One is always one, two is always two. They're not going to change.

When was the last time you had a totally new idea? What was the idea? What triggered you to have the idea?

Why make the commitment to understand and expand your own HD?
Will it make you rich? Happy? Wise? Successful? Yes, it can.
If you're determined to earn your first million by a certain age or to become president of your company, working on your habitual domain will help get you there — or as close as you personally can be.
Understanding the power of habitual domains can help you achieve any

But more importantly, being aware of your HD will provide something inherently valuable — and more difficult to gain than wealth for many people: a sense of balance in your life.

You all heard stories of business and professional people, entertainers and others who fought valiantly to reach a particular goal, but once achieved it found they were somehow dissatisfied. For all their achievements, they felt oddly incomplete.

But if you truly understand his or her HD will certainly be more balanced and powerful if those are the goals you set for yourself. It will be part of your success in reaching them.

When you have balanced a sense of stability (financial security) and growth (self-actualization) you will see you through almost anything.

So, if you intelligently develop your HD, no harm can come to you in business and in life.

Remember, the highs and other temporary satisfying pleasures and accomplishments won't grow habitual domain.

An **operator** is a different sort of circuit pattern which allows us to change and reorder these static ideas into new relationships which create new ideas.

For example, simple addition is an arithmetic operator which allows us to deal with unchanging numbers in a new way. Thus, if we combine one and two we get three.

An egg and a rock are two different things. The idea of the egg or the rock — what we know it looks like, where we know it comes from, what we know it is made of — is essentially fixed. But if we compare them, the act of comparison is an operator: An egg is a living thing, a rock is not; both can be thrown; one will break and one will not. These are new ideas resulting from the comparison of static ideas.

In the abstract, our habitual domain is the collection of all the ideas and operators that exist as circuit patterns in our brains. Some of these ideas and operators have very strong circuit patterns. Others are relatively weak.

When we're called upon to process new information, to analyze incoming events or to make judgments, it's the strongest ideas and operators — the ones of which we are most conscious — that we'll draw upon first.

Because we all have different habitual domains, we may react differently to the same object, image or event. The way we interpret and judge arriving events depends on the degree of attention we give to how and what combinations of ideas and operators are activated.

We can understand ourselves better when we become aware of how ideas and operators work in our minds. We can change behavior, knowledge, even belief, when we purposefully activate an operator to deal with a static idea we already have.

Pavlov's Dogs

The Russian scientist Pavlov is responsible for one of the world's most famous experiments. Though his subjects were dogs, the results apply to humans as well.

In the experiment, dogs were fed a piece of meat shortly after the ringing of a bell. The meat and the ringing of the bell were associated with happy events to the dog, which also built a circuit pattern connecting the ringing with the meat and with the happiness of eating. After several repeti-

e of the word "paradigm" an a circuit pattern for a posed limitation we have ed over time and placed selves, sometimes at an cious level A paradigm te many forms, from the at you cannot sing or r are not good at math, or outgoing, to the feeling u can't succeed in life nit you impose on yourself considered a paradigm, g it results in self-fulfilling es. Think about the gms you have imposed on f and what you can do to lieving them

tions, the dogs started to salivate at the sound of the bell even though no meat was given them. The dogs had learned to associate the ringing of a bell with meat even without the presence of meat because the corresponding circuit patterns were strong enough.

The experiment was further refined. A dog was conditioned to salivate only when a high-frequency bell was rung. Then, when a low-frequency bell was rung, an electric shock was administered to the animal.

The shocks frightened the dog; before long, the dog began to shake whenever it heard the low-frequency bell. It wasn't necessary even to administer the electric shock — at the sound of the low frequency bell, the animal acted as if it were being shocked!

Then the frequencies of the two bells were modified so that their sounds became more and more similar. When the frequencies were so close that the dog could not distinguish between them, and the animal couldn't be sure whether it was going to receive food or a shock, it developed neurotic behavior. This could be due to confusion in the activation of proper circuit patterns.

When the frequencies of the bells were readjusted to increase their differences, the dog's behavior returned to normal. Based on the sounds, it once again knew whether to expect food or a shock.



When confronted with a new event, the brain first investigates its features and attributes to establish a relationship — an analogy or an association of the new event to the already known. The whole of one's past knowledge is brought to bear in understanding the new event.

When we change a circuit pattern, the change becomes part of our habitual domain and is applied to all the new events and information we encounter. That's why even small changes can matter a great deal to improving our lives.

Just as a computer runs on software or programming, so the human brain has its own programming. These are thoughts, concepts and ideas that form circuit patterns. Even though we

may not be consciously aware of them, these patterns often dictate how we react to certain situations and stimuli.

Circuit patterns are always changing as new data is introduced to our mental computers, but they remain powerful forces inside each of us. Consider, for example, the common emotion of anger. When anger takes over, it can result in physiological changes — a reddened face, sweating, increased heartbeat. That's the work of the anger circuit pattern established in our brains over an entire lifetime.

You can turn off that circuit and get rid of the anger.

Try smiling. It sounds too simple to be effective, but the next time you are angry, force yourself to smile.

Circuit patterns already in your brain link smiling with happy thoughts. When you smile, 40 or so facial muscles send a "happy" message to your brain.

At that point the brain shifts into its happy circuit patterns. Next time you feel your anger rising, try smiling or laughing. You won't be able to become angry, or at least not to the degree you would otherwise. You'll have learned an important lesson about controlling your emotions and about your ability to repattern your brain at will.

The Elephant's Limitation

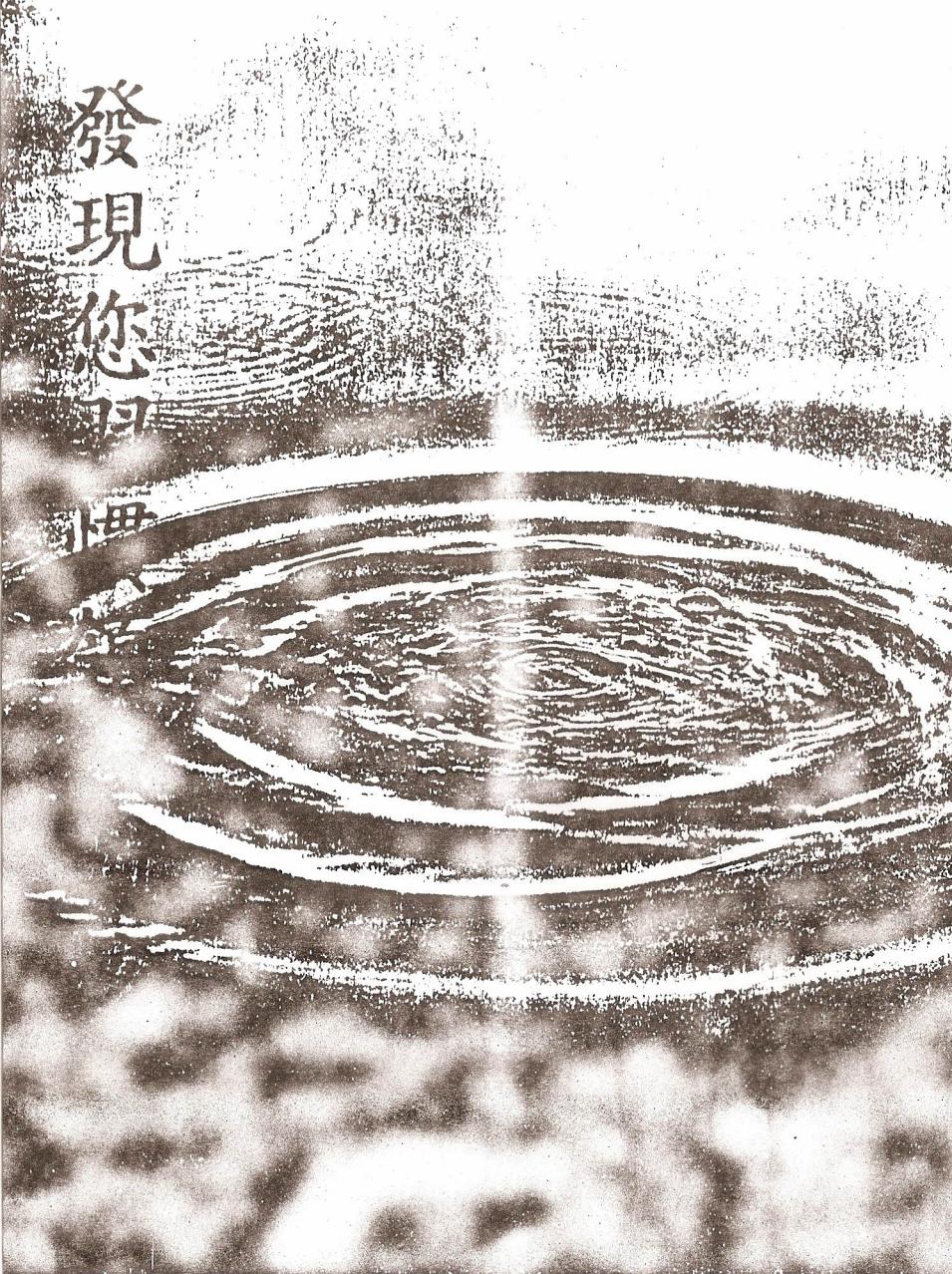
Under a circus bigtop you may find huge elephants tethered with slender ropes to the poles that hold up the tent. These powerful animals could easily break the rope or pull down the pole — but they don't even try to escape. It's because they are prisoners of their limited habitual domains.

When these mighty creatures were small, their trainers tied them to strong concrete or steel columns with an unbreakable metal chain. Initially, the young elephants struggled to escape, but their efforts were in vain. After a few months, they became used to their situation. They acquired a habit, or a program, if you think of the elephant's brain as a computer.

Now, whenever these elephants find themselves roped to a column their programming tells them — and they believe — that there is no way to escape. So they never try.

To realize your true potential, beware of habits that restrict your thinking and actions. Instead, build circuit patterns for flexibility, adventure and freedom. Welcome new ideas.





Chapter 3

Discovering the Core of Your Habitual Domain

We know that each of us has a habitual domain. But our brain is not limited to this. In fact, the very lack of limits is what makes understanding our habitual domain exciting.

The anatomy of our habitual domain is made up of these elements:

- **Potential Domain:** This is the collection of all the ideas and operators that can potentially be activated in our brain.
- **Actual Domain:** The ideas and operators that actually are being used at one time. The tossing of two coins can be metaphor for this. There are four possible outcomes of heads and tails (the potential domain), but only one actual outcome (actual domain). Thus the actual domain is the only domain that occupies our attention at a given moment. It's our mental focus point.
- **Activation Probability:** The probability that particular ideas and operators will be activated.
- **Reachable Domain:** When we activate a set of ideas and operators, we can generate new sets of ideas and operators. These new ideas and operators are the reachable domain.

In every person the potential domain is enormous. Every sound, every sight, every meeting, every book — indeed, every experience — can become part of a person's domain.

In fact, however, a person accesses a very small part of this potential universe of knowledge, feeling and action. The part that is being accessed is the actual domain. Many things diminish our ability to reach the potential within ourselves. Factors ranging from health, to opportunity, to self-imposed failures can restrict us and affect the probability that we will activate even a small portion of the potential available in our brains. Our reachable domain is how much we can and will activate. The point of understanding our habitual domain is the ability to pull more "potential" into our actual domain, to be able to use more of what is really available in our virtually limitless power.

The drive to tap this power is as individual as the power itself. Some people will reach more of their potential than others because they focus more intently upon the possibilities.

The Glass Salesman

Some years ago, Corning Glass developed a shatter-proof glass product. At the annual event to recognize sales performance, one salesman's achievements were so far beyond the rest that he was asked to share with the entire sales force the secret of his success. He explained that he simply put a piece of the shatter proof glass in front of a potential customer and struck it as hard as he could with a hammer. Everyone who saw the demonstration placed an order.

The company was so excited about the technique that it ordered kits with a hammer and pieces of glass made for every salesman. The next year, the same man was again salesperson of the year. The rest of the sales force wondered why, when they all had the same tools, he had again beaten all their efforts. He explained that he hadn't used the kit. Once it had become "standard issue" for the sales force, the hammer and glass example was no longer fresh for him, he said. Instead, he had found another way to demonstrate to customers the qualities of the glass he was selling by letting his customers hit the glass themselves.

This story illustrates several crucial elements of using an

awareness of habitual domain to release our personal best efforts. First, the successful salesman looked at the possibilities of his task in a new way and struck upon the hammer and glass demonstration. No doubt his presentation was appealing not only because of the physical example of the shatter-proof glass but because of the energy the man brought to striking the glass with the hammer. That kind of energy kept him from staying with the method the following year. When the hammer and glass kit became part of his habitual domain, he reached again to his potential domain and found another approach. This let him beat the performance of the sales people who were satisfied with the kit they were handed and looked no further.



To be able to tap our unlimited power and potential, we first need to locate our own special habitual domain. Every person "lives" or has the center of his or her being in a different "place." That place is our habitual domain. To grow we have to expand its boundaries. We do that by understanding how our minds work.

Habitual domain is the collection of ideas and operators existing in our minds. These ideas and operators make us who we are. That is why different people treat the same experience differently. We activate different ideas and operators when we deal with different events or problems.

The Core of Your Habitual Domain

The probability of a certain idea or operator being activated will vary depending upon many factors — everything that bears upon us at a certain moment. Those ideas and operators that have the highest probability of being activated are the **core** of the habitual domain.

The habitual domain's core contains your strongest beliefs, ideas and operators, represented by very strong circuit patterns, many of them learned from your parents or other role models when you are young. They become strong

Your habitual domain is the collection of ideas and operators existing in your mind — it is unique. No one else will experience life in exactly the same way you will



ideas and operators through repetition over time. Unless you are forced to change them (as recruits in military boot camp who are made to fold socks in a highly particular way will fold them that way the rest of their lives), or are confronted by another culture (as immigrants are), or have some reason to examine your core thoughts carefully, they will dictate your behavior without your even being aware of it.

In psychology, mental processes that occur without conscious awareness are called the subconscious. The subconscious may be regarded as part of the collection of ideas and operators that make up your potential domain. They may not catch your attention at the moment (that is, they aren't in your actual domain), but under proper conditions — say, when you're in a quiet environment or when your charge structure is at a very low level — they will come to your attention and affect your behaviors and thoughts.

Ideas and operators are very strong, but they are not set in stone. While certain ideas are at the core of the way you look at the world, even the ideas that make up your subconscious can be changed.

But to do so, you must be aware of and work with eight common behavior tendencies, extremely strong circuit patterns that can be activated quickly and without much conscious effort to process information and affect your behavior.

Eight Strong Behavior Patterns

Activating these behavior tendencies can be very useful as shortcuts in assessing others and your relationships with them. But they have pitfalls as well, and you must always be alert when employing them.

When you read these, you may say, "Of course. These behaviors are so obvious." They are common, indeed, but that is why they are worth examining. These tendencies are so strongly a part of our unconscious behavior that we may not recognize them in ourselves — sometimes with negative results. We are used to seeing ourselves in a broad view, not to examining specifics. We look at the forest, not the trees.

All these behaviors affect our relations with others.

Think of times when you said to yourself you were too scared, too nervous, too unsure to do something you very much wanted to do. Analyze what it was that you felt was lacking. Very likely the fear was a result of your habitual domain. Realizing what limited you from growing is the first step in allowing yourself to grow. Make a list of three such situations and as the opportunities present themselves again, address the issues that held you back and do whatever it was you once passed up.

Behavior and beliefs learned in childhood make up a big part of the core of a person's habitual domain.

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Much of our potential domain — our chance to change and grow — comes from our interaction with other people. It is important to keep an “open mind” in the best sense — to let the boundaries of our personal habitual domain be open to visitors, people from whom we can learn.

SOCIAL COMPARISON

To reach our desired goals, we need to understand our state and position in society — in our close relationships, our neighborhoods, our workplaces. If we don’t have objective information or standards by which to make such an evaluation, we will make it by comparing ourselves with people whom we think are in the same social circumstances as we are.

Social comparison is a vital tool for individual survival. A very obvious example is represented by the familiar saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” In other words, when you’re in an unfamiliar place, you observe the behavior of others and pattern your actions after theirs. Your odds of getting along in that particular environment are then improved.

Clearly, in a business environment, comparison can be crucial to success. A new employee who cannot fit into a corporate culture probably won’t last in the company. And the global marketplace demands that business people use social comparison to avoid being insensitive to the social customs of colleagues or clients from cultures other than their own.

The social comparison method is a fast and simple way to expand your habitual domain, but you must be aware of the following points:

- To work, the background conditions must be similar and comparable. There’s no point in comparing an adult to an infant. But comparing common behaviors of adults does provide meaningful and useful results.
- The comparison must have a focus. You cannot assume that because a person is good at mathematics, he or she will be good at other subjects. A teacher who picks a class leader on the basis of that person’s grades may find that grades are no indication of leadership ability.

Focus on the precise qualities you want to examine in your comparison. Be specific.

- Practice modesty and be aware of others’ feelings.

When making comparisons, be alert to the possibility that you may react to the process in negative ways.

If you conclude that you are stronger, more successful or superior to the person you are comparing yourself to, the result could be pride and self-satisfaction. That reaction can be destructive enough even if you keep it to yourself. If you make it obvious to others, you could find yourself being rejected or isolated. Nobody likes a snob.

It is best, under such circumstances, to practice humility and caution in your dealings with others.

If, on the other hand, you determine from your comparison that others are superior to you, you might react with jealousy and resentment. You could become bitter, and you might abandon your efforts at self-improvement as useless.

A more positive reaction to finding yourself in an inferior position would be to learn from others, increasing your confidence and skills. At the same time, you mark yourself as an individual willing to work hard to improve yourself. And, by asking others to teach you, you pay them a high compliment which will only increase their willingness to help you out.

Social comparisons are extensively utilized in management. A company may publicize the efforts of each division and reward the division with the best performance. This can create incentive and increase productivity. Another tactical use of social comparison is to put “successful” people in the spotlight to create a standard for achievement. Thus naming an employee of the month can increase the charge and drive in others to perform and compete.

For an individual trying to reach a goal, comparison to an admired person, a role model, can be helpful as an example and incentive. It is not necessary to be in personal contact with the role model. Even reading a biography of a person who has the character or achievements you admire can have a positive effect on your habitual domain.

HALO EFFECT

When judging others, we tend to classify subjects into two groups, good or bad. People who seem to be “good” take on all the positive

In your office or in another group you are part of, look around at the people you are with. Have you already subconsciously classified them? Are there some people you prefer to work near? Why? Can you state what it is about each person that attracts you or turns you off? Do these people know you have classified them? Is classifying a good habit in some situations? Will changing your classifications be positive for the working environment?

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attributes of good people, people who seem to be "bad" take on all the negative attributes of bad people.

This is an ancient response, meant for protection.

When you meet someone for the first time, do you try to quickly categorize them as a friend or as an enemy? Perhaps as "my kind of person" or "not my kind of person"? Most people do. It's why "success coaches" warn business people that they have only a couple of minutes to make a lasting favorable impression on an interviewer or a potential client.

The trouble, of course, is that incomplete knowledge can be misleading. An unwashed person in ragged clothing may be quickly identified as uneducated, incompetent and unreliable. Of course, none of those things is necessarily true. An attractive individual in good clothes may seem smart, intelligent, capable and reliable, but could as easily be a con artist.

The halo effect is one of our standard evaluation methods from childhood on. When called upon to process a large amount of information (say, at a party attended by many strangers) we speed up and simplify the process by categorizing the people who are there in two classes.

Based on their clothing, body language and other external indicators, we decide that a person is good or bad and attribute to them good or bad characteristics. It's a simple process and, for most people, past experience has usually shown it to be very useful.

The problem is, the halo effect can cause errors in judgment if not used with the proper caution. It's the same dilemma as when we use a point to represent an area. We know only a little, but we generalize a lot. And oversimplification leads to mistakes.

You must always keep in mind that at first meeting you have seen only a small portion of another individual. What's more, people change over time. The behavior on which you judge that person may not even be typical of him, or he may abandon that sort of behavior in the future.

The best advice is to avoid quick judgments.

PROJECTION EFFECT

Humans have a strong tendency to assume that others are similar to themselves.

If you like steak, you tend to think that others also like steak. If you like a painting, you may assume that another person also would love to have it hanging on the wall.

Of course, that isn't necessarily so.

In business, misuse of the projection effect might have been responsible for a dismaying 70 percent failure rate among corporate mergers.

What happens is that the managers of one company tend to project their management philosophy and operating system onto the companies with which they merge or which they acquire. But if the other company, in fact, has different processes, routines and philosophies, the two may not be compatible.

It's also one of the ground rules in advertising and public relations. Just because a product or an advertising approach works well with one market, doesn't mean it will with another. The Coca-Cola company found this out when it decided to distribute a red wine.

Company strategists knew that they had developed a successful marketing strategy for beverages over the years. They thought they would simply apply those tried-and-true methods to the new product. After two years and many millions of dollars in red ink, the company dropped its wine product. It had become all too clear that people don't drink red wine like they drink soft drinks. The two markets were profoundly different, and to sell the wine effectively would mean developing an entirely new promotion strategy. Eventually the company sold its winery.

If you're going to use the projection effect in your personal relationships, be sure to speculate on and test the emotions and intentions of others. There always are those who would pretend to be open and sincere but are actually hiding their true natures. They may project an image that they believe will be appealing to you, but over time they will give themselves away. You must be ready to pick up the signals through a person's revealed behavior and not take behavior at surface value. Listen and observe.

Here's something else to look out for. It's a bit like an inversion of the well-known Golden Rule:

Don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you. And don't impose on others what you want for yourself.

About 4,000 years ago, in China, ruled a wise and highly respected emperor, Yao. One day Emperor Yao visited Far Mountain, where the people welcomed him with blessings and wished Yao longevity, wealth and many children. Yao politely refused their wishes. The people of Far Mountain were puzzled. They said, "Long life, wealth and many children are what all people desire. Why are you not interested?"

Yao said, "Too many children lead to too many worries, too much wealth to too many troubles, and longevity invites insults. These three things will not help me cultivate my mind."

The people of Far Mountain had projected their own desires onto the Emperor, but he was an exception to the ways they knew. This story reminds us not to project our own judgments, nor force what we wish for ourselves onto others.

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The first part of this rule is obvious enough. If something irritates or bothers you, don't do it to somebody else.

The second statement requires some contemplation. Different people have different likes and dislikes. Just because you like something or wish an event to occur, you cannot assume that anybody else will. A classic example is the person who throws a surprise party for her friend's birthday because she can't think of anything that would be more fun for her own birthday — and then is surprised when the friend is embarrassed and ill-at-ease. On a personal level, this is why it's not a good practice to give art as a gift and expect the recipient to hang it in his or her home. Their tastes in art may be different from yours.

PROXIMITY THEORY

People are more likely to develop good friendships or intimacy when they live close together rather than when they live far apart.

Contrary to the common saying, it is not absence but nearness that makes the heart grow fonder. Studies show that a higher percentage of good grades in a class go to students who sit close to the teacher.

There is a Chinese saying: "Water miles away can't put out a fire over here." Cultivate friendship with those in close proximity to you. They're the ones you'll call on in an emergency.

Don't make enemies of your neighbors. Most wars involve countries with common borders.

The application of this theory to the workplace is fairly obvious. It's important to get along well with the people you see every day. Moreover, if you hope for a quick promotion, try to place yourself near the people who most represent your company's power. Seek projects that let you work close to your boss. If your performance is good, your name will come to mind when it's time to promote someone.

Likewise, if your customers are important to you, stay close to them. Keep in regular contact. Call them, write them, send them birthday cards. That way when they need products or services, they'll think of you. To include others in your habitual domain or to be included in theirs, proximity is important.

RECIPROCATION

People tend to like others whom they know like them, and dislike those whom they perceive dislike them.

This should come as no surprise to you. In fact, examples of this kind of reciprocity are everywhere. We wish — or feel obligated — to extend to others the kind of behavior they extend to us. Favors are expected to be returned.

When you send a holiday card, you expect one in return. If I scratch your back, will you scratch mine?

Fast-trackers who become managers or corporate officers at a relatively young age usually are very good at applying this behavior. They're willing to help departments other than their own or people in other divisions or companies. In return, they can often call on those whom they have helped for assistance.

This arrangement may benefit the individual, but it also builds teamwork within an overall operation. Various persons and departments find themselves working together for a common goal. Reciprocity is important to building friendships, organizations and even whole communities. From neighborhood baby-sitting cooperatives to public/private partnerships, modern communities need reciprocity to thrive.

In your relationships, always be alert for bribery or corruption. The line between appropriate examples of reciprocity and those that are illegal or immoral may be thin.

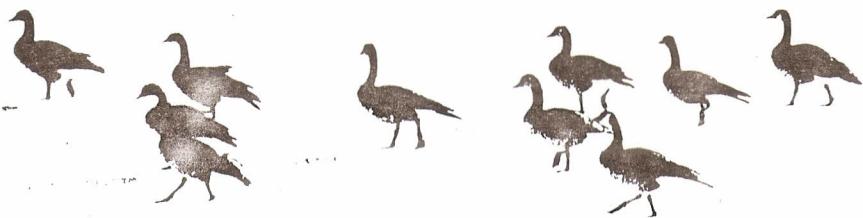
For your individual application of reciprocity, if someone does not like you, try to remain fair and impartial in your dealings with that person. If you can persistently like those who dislike you, over time you may be able to bring about a positive change in their attitude.

Also, remember to be careful not to let the value of the reciprocation be lost in guilt. Feeling guilty that you didn't return a favor — or that you don't like someone who likes you — sets up a negative charge structure. This is unhealthy and needs to be released. Reciprocity can enlarge your habitual domain, but guilt is not helpful.

SIMILARITY EFFECT

People with similar backgrounds, attitudes and thought processes are more likely to develop good friendships and intimacy among themselves than with people who have different backgrounds and attitudes.

Consider people you know from your office, school class, club or worship group. Choose three you would like to work with on a group project. Why did you choose those three? Now choose three you would not want to work with and explain the reasons why. Look again at the three you did not choose first and list good points about these people. Does this help change your attitude about them?



If everyone in your office wears business attire, you might regard someone in casual clothing as an outsider. "Not one of us."

A teenager will more than likely prefer to hang out with other teenagers rather than people her parents' age. Members of a particular religious denomination may find their closest friends within that group.

Cats prefer to socialize with other cats; dogs with other dogs.

The similarity effect has been well explored in the field of marketing, where various consumer groups are identified by age, income, geography, education — even the kind of cars they drive. This market segmentation allows the marketing of special products to specific groups.

Many successful corporations instill similar interests in their employees by letting those workers know what the company's goals are and the methods for achieving them. When people understand their common goals and have a common strategy to follow, they feel closer to one another.

Relationships built on similarity readily add to your habitual domain because you are already comfortable with some aspect of the other persons and less resistant to their ideas than you might be to those of strangers. On the other hand, be aware of the limitations of this tendency, because it can keep you from experiencing the advantages of diversity.

SCAPEGOATING

When people are in a frustrated or anxious state and do not know the source of their frustration (or perhaps they do know but do not dare attack it directly), they often search for a substitute to attack in hopes of releasing their frustration. That substitute is a scapegoat.

Scapegoating, then, is a way of releasing a charge which we cannot quite identify. Unable to identify the real source of our charge, we pick a scapegoat to attack. The Nazi persecution of the Jews is one of history's most alarming examples.

Quite aside from the fundamental immorality of blaming someone unfairly, scapegoating has long-term negative consequences that far outweigh the quick, temporary relief the practice provides. We must:

The common behavior tendency of similarity claims that human beings are more likely to develop close relationships with people who are similar to us than people with different backgrounds. This is another way of saying we are more comfortable with what we know. Yet if we wish to be growing, self-actualized people, should we choose to know people who are different from ourselves so we can continue to grow beyond our comfort zones?

All creatures prefer the company of similar creatures. Humans, however, can understand the value of diversity.



- Realize that scapegoating behavior is aggressive, irresponsible and crude. It is inherently unjust.
- Find the courage to face the source of our frustration. This may be very difficult, but the only way out is to find the source, confront it and solve the problem. Otherwise the problem may grow. If we can find the courage to do this, we will also gain more self-confidence.
- Protect ourselves against scapegoating. Since scapegoating is a least resistance method of releasing frustration, ensure that our position and reputation is such that we are a high-resistance target.
- In corporations, develop a system of internal arbitration and a grievance procedure. This channel will allow people to vent their frustrations and be heard, thus lessening the likelihood that they will resort to scapegoating.

Recognizing our own tendencies to find a scapegoat for frustration can be the first step to building a habitual domain in which that kind of negative behavior has no place.

RESPONSIBILITY DIFFUSION IN GROUP BEHAVIOR

When we are members of a group and we lack precise and clear individual responsibilities, some of us tend to neglect the duties we otherwise would assume.

We figure that our slacking off will be compensated for by the efforts of the other group members. In other words, without specific responsibilities we believe our duties are diffused and shared with other group members.

Responsibility diffusion also suggests that should the project go well, all will share in the praise. Should it go badly, no one individual will be singled out for blame, but the responsibility for the failure will be shared by all group members.

In applying this behavior to groups, please remember:

- Clear and accountable responsibilities and authority should be granted to each individual. This will reduce diffusion of responsibility.
- We must cultivate good attitudes within the group: mutual concern and assistance, fairness, hard work,

An American travels to a foreign country with a different language than English, but the American speaks only English. Will the American quickly be able to form an opinion on whether the locals are friendly? How will behavior be affected on both sides?

Once there was a hermit who lived on a mountain. Every morning he got up early and raised the window just before the sun came up. In time, his opening the window and seeing the sun rise were linked in his mind, and he began to refuse the offers of friends to come down from the mountain to visit. "I have a responsibility," he said. "If I do not raise my window the sun may not rise."

The opposite of responsibility diffusion can be one person's assuming too much responsibility. Finding an appropriate balance of responsible action is an important part of understanding your own behavior.

our workplace or some
organization (club),
and see how the
diffuse responsibility
members purposely
shirk their responsibility?
Are there some ways to stop
this kind of behavior?

observation of the rules and positive attitudes for resolving conflicts. This reduces irresponsible behavior.

- In a group job, the responsibility of each individual should be made clear. When there is a problem, the relevant individuals should be held responsible.
- We must be able to identify wrong group behavior and be willing to oppose it. Just because it's a majority opinion, it isn't necessarily right.
- We have to apply this behavior very skillfully and carefully. Group behavior can create tremendous force and momentum — enough to overthrow a government. The unification of a group in protests and marches can be so effective that it will drive others to conform and support a cause. When their enthusiasm becomes so strong that they forget about the danger or their fear of death, they can achieve virtually any political or social reform.

For individuals, there is a difference in the ability to expand one's habitual domain and the willingness to let group behavior stand in for personal responsibility or choice. "Going along with the crowd" doesn't really tap our personal potential.

These eight strong behavior tendencies are common but they are not the only ones that are readily recognizable. Can you locate more that are frequently activated (*i.e.*, strong circuit patterns) to affect your thought and behavior? Try it.

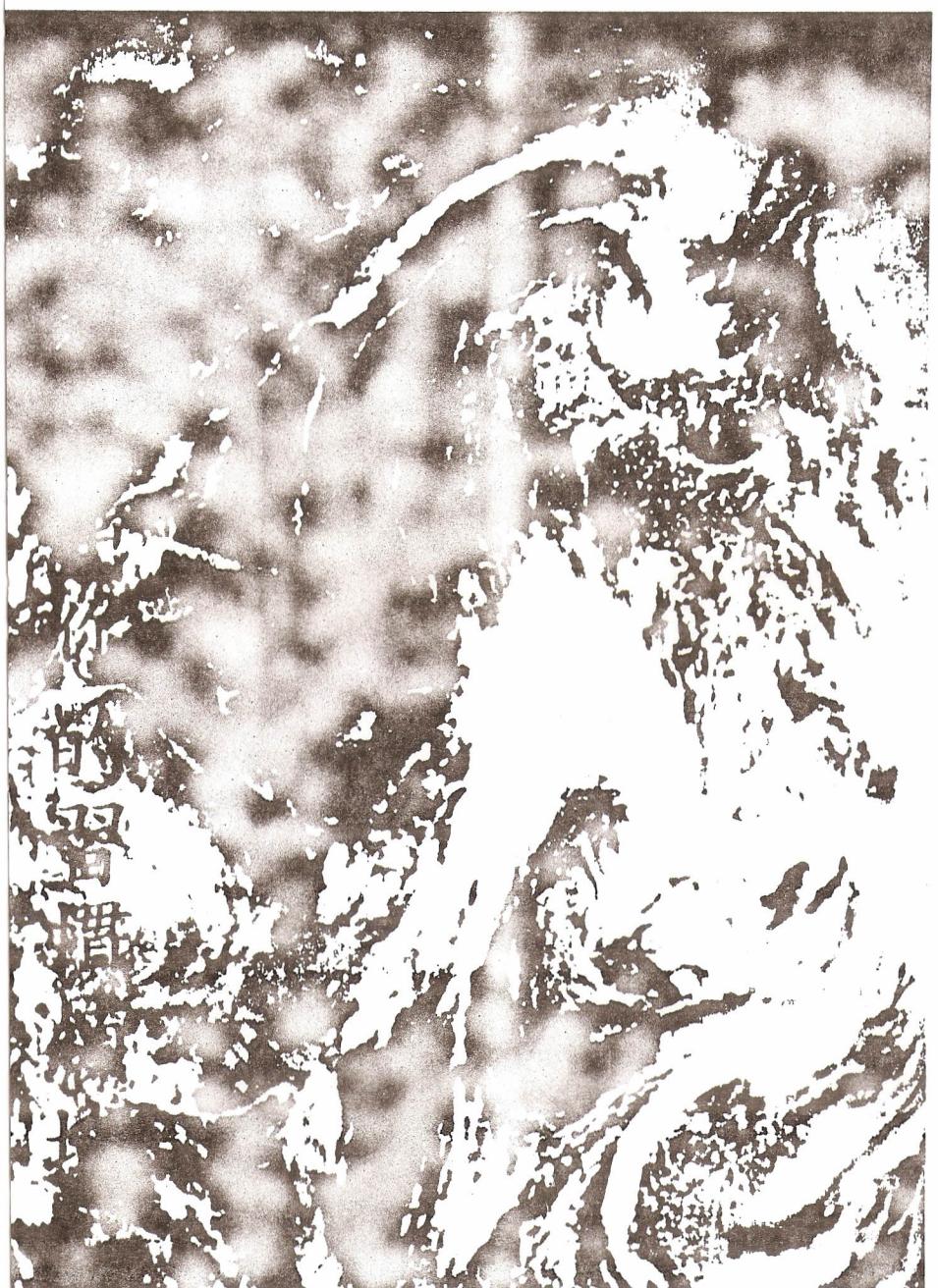
As you begin to see behavior tendencies in yourself and others, you will observe basic human paradoxes as well.



A Few Basic Human Paradoxes

- We're usually unaware of the wonderful machines that are our bodies and brains — until they're broken.
- We usually take good for granted, and don't really appreciate what we have until it is threatened.
- We tend to be most impolite to the people who love us most — our parents.
- Suffering is a kind of charge, though unpleasant, it often makes us better people.
- People tend to underestimate the value of their invisible assets — skills, knowledge, talents — while overvaluing what they don't have.
- In the long run, losing may be better for you than winning. That's because losing creates a high level of charge which triggers a positive readjustment of your goal setting. Winning may leave you self-satisfied and without further goals to encourage your growth.
- It's easier to criticize, condemn and complain than it is to be appreciative, understanding and forgiving.
- People tend to select information consistent with their own views rather than that which does not conform to their beliefs. Positive feedback is more welcome than negative feedback — though negative feedback forces us to grow.
- Memories of anger and resentment tend to outweigh those of gratitude and appreciation. Moreover, we tend to think that how much we give outweighs how much we receive.

Recognizing these paradoxes can help us set aside the conflicts they represent and move ahead to create positive relationships with others and within ourselves, so we make the most of our limitless power and individual capabilities.



Chapter 4

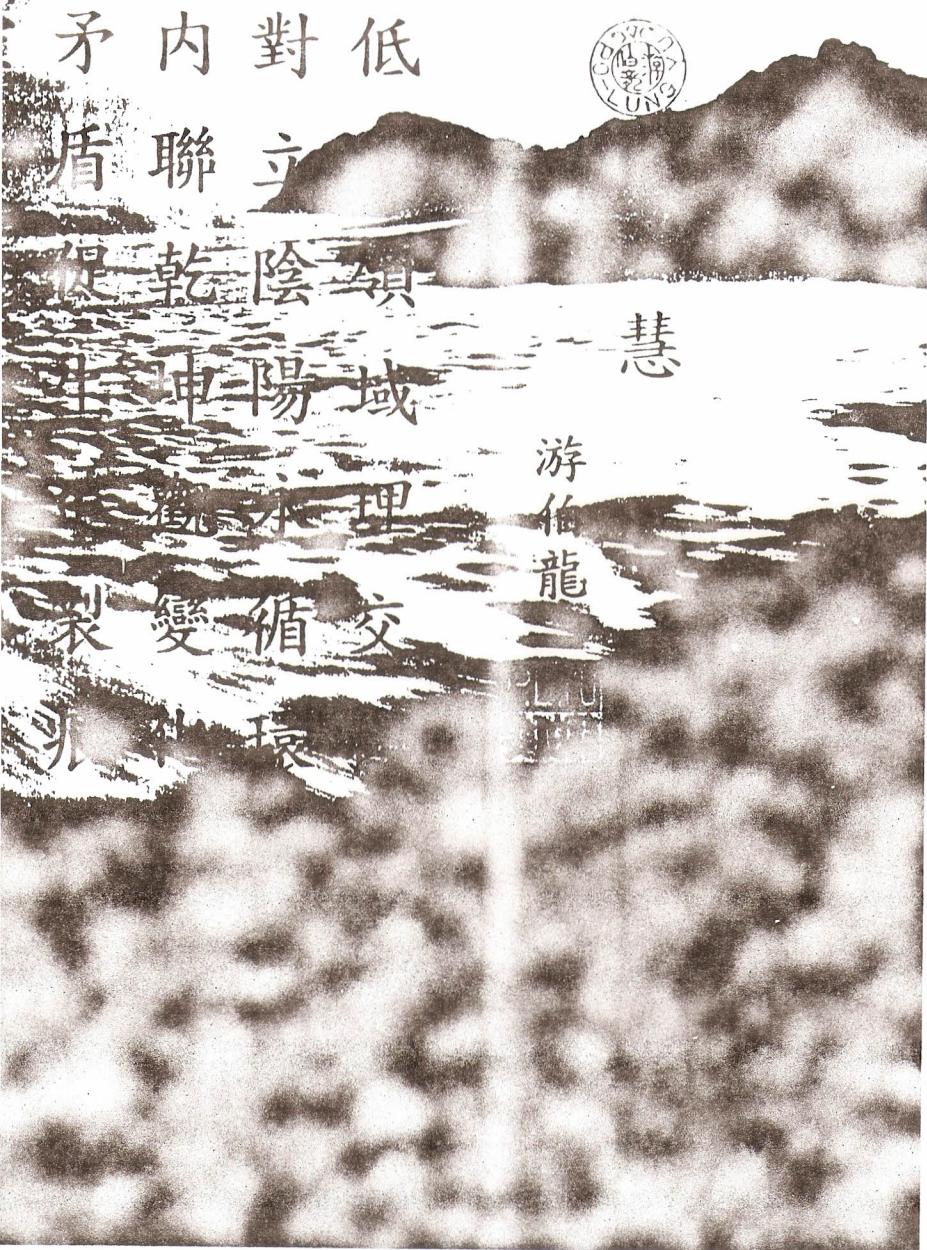
Preparing to Map Your Habitual Domain

A

s you read this book, you may decide to set any number of goals for yourself. The book itself has three very basic goals:

- To help you understand that your brain power — and therefore, your personal potential — is unlimited.
- To help you discover your habitual domain and ways to expand it.
- To help you discover how the habitual domains of others — individually and in organizations — can contribute productively to your efforts to reach your personal potential

As you move ahead in the book, you will see how to estimate and assess personal and organizational habitual domains. Just about everyone can already perform this kind of assessment, at least on a superficial level. We do it as part of our regular orientation to the world and people around us, but most people do not see the fundamental and repeated patterns that would allow them to use their assessments to the best advantage.



Most importantly, most people are not aware of their own habitual domains. Assessing those should come first. But the tools to do this require some insights into some underlying principles of human knowledge. I call these the "Nine Principles of Deep Knowledge."

Nine Principles of Deep Knowledge

Certainly, these are simplifications of very complex circuit patterns. I have suggested images that might help you remember the principles easily. They are overviews, but broad views and assessments can be useful. In war, the generals on both sides think they can win (otherwise, a good general would avoid the war altogether). But it is the side which best assesses the overall situation that claims victory.

These principles represent some **operators** (thinking procedures and attitudes) that can produce better assessments. These operators can be used to understand your habitual domain and to expand it.

The operators, once they are pointed out to you, will seem obvious. But the person who can repeatedly use and master them will have a distinct advantage.

Recall that your actual domain is only a small portion of your potential domain, and only a small part of your actual domain is observable. Just because you can't observe it readily doesn't mean that it isn't in use. A runner can't see his calf muscle, but can't run without it.

We must examine the observable part of our actual domain, considering what we do know about ourselves, and from it glean as much information as possible about the entire actual domain and the potential domain as well.

The following nine principles can help us sharpen our assessment and, in the process, expand our habitual domains. Study them. Think about them. Make them strong circuit patterns in your brain so that you will automatically apply these principles to the events in your life.

THE DEEP AND DOWN PRINCIPLE

This can also be remembered as the **ocean principle**

Wisdom

- In the domain of **deep and down**, reasoning is **alternating**.
 - Yin and Yang are **contrast and complement**; they are **revolving and cycling**.
 - Inner connecting to the sky and the earth, **changing and transforming** can be observed.
 - **Contradiction** can enrich life; look for **cracking and ripping**.
 - Outside the true **void** state is not void.
- (translation of poem, page 46)



because water in an ocean ebbs and flows. Sometimes the tide is high, sometimes the sea retreats from shore. So it is with our energies and charges.

This principle has two meanings.

First, every so often you need to reduce your charges to as low a level as possible. When you're very busy and deeply concentrating, only ideas carrying extremely strong charges will occupy your mind. You simply will be too preoccupied with those situations to consider anything else.

Under such circumstances, ideas with lower charges (i.e., the ideas corresponding to weak circuit patterns that can be activated only when our charge structure is at a lower level) cannot capture your attention. It may be that these low-charge ideas could be very valuable in solving the problem you're dealing with, but they just can't make themselves heard in the high-charged atmosphere of your mind.

There's another drawback to being consumed by high-charge ideas. If you have several of these demanding charges occupying your mind, your attention will be pulled back and forth among them. Your focus repeatedly will be turned on and off, without your ever being able to apply your intense and persistent focus to any one event.

Deep knowledge is hard to come by under these circumstances.

What's needed is a daily period of time — no matter how short — to practice deep thinking. It might be a period of quiet meditation or prayer, a relaxation exercise, soaking in a warm bath, running or hiking or simply sitting still and appreciating nature.

The idea is to empty your mind of desires and to insulate yourself from the external bombardment of ideas. By doing so you create an atmosphere conducive to deep thinking.

When you're relaxing, your overall charge level is lower, and "hidden" thoughts with much lower charges come bubbling up. Relaxation can also make you more sensitive to emerging problems, allowing you to solve them when they are at a fairly simple stage.

During a busy day, these weaker charges would never be able to make themselves known. In a relaxed situation, you can become aware of them.

*Knowing when to stop
produces calmness,
After calmness, tranquility
can arrive,
After tranquility, inner peace
can be achieved;
With inner peace, deliberation
can be effective,
Which leads to the attainment
of goals*

— Confucius
(translation of poem, page 48)

And you need to be aware of them if you're going to get the big picture. Individuals who never allow themselves to enjoy a rested state, those who race from morning to bedtime, will miss a lot.

Many relaxation exercises, even brief ones, can help you change your energy flow and help you get into deeper thought. A few moments can transform your "ocean feeling" from crashing waves to a steady tide of creative thought. Try this exercise next time you feel that your head is too full to think clearly.

The Sun Exercise

Stand in a relaxed way or sit in a comfortable chair. Hold your arms in front of you with your hands cupped gently upward as if you were holding in each palm a tiny, brilliant sun. Raise your arms until your hands are level with your head, bringing your arms to either side of your body and turning your palms toward your face so that the little suns can warm you.

Breathe in a deep and relaxed way and close your eyes. Feel the suns warming your face, as if you were lying on a tropical beach. Move your arms so that the suns warm your whole face and the top of your head. Gradually move your arms so that the suns can warm your neck and chest.

Feel the sun soaking into your muscles, soaking deeper into the cells of your body. Imagine every cell is drenched in sunlight. Move your arms to sun yourself down through your midsection and further onto your legs. If you are standing, sun your back at waist level. Feel the relaxation basking in the sun brings.

Do this for a few minutes every day and experience well-being. Do it when you are stressed and be revitalized.



A woman who is the president of a large department store in Taiwan, and a student of Habitual Domains, uses this exercise daily. She says that her work requires her to put so much energy into people every day that she was drained. Now she does this exercise before work and feels that she is able to radiate the warmth and energy of two suns to all the people who ask for her attention.

The second element of the Deep and Down Principle is regularly to take what I refer to as "the humble position" when dealing with others.

It's natural for human beings to cultivate a sense of superiority over their fellows. But periodically we need to drop the attitude of the teacher and view ourselves as students, to forget for the moment that we're the boss and take the unassuming position of an employee, or to let go of the parent role and see ourselves as children.

Many believe that assuming the inferior position in a situation is a sign of weakness. On the contrary — it is a regular practice of wise and secure individuals.

When we practice humility — asking for advice instead of giving it, taking orders instead of giving them — we actually strengthen our position.

Others will be flattered when we ask them to teach us, and any resentments they harbor toward us will begin to dissipate. As our teachers, they will feel a degree of responsibility toward us. In the role of students we're less likely to give offense and we gain the sympathy, understanding and support of others.

Moreover, when we assume the humble position, we force our minds to be open and willing to absorb new information.

THE ALTERNATING PRINCIPLE

This can be remembered as the **door principle**. A door can be open or shut. If it did not have this alternating function, it would have no value as a door. A door which is always closed or always open will lose its use as a door.

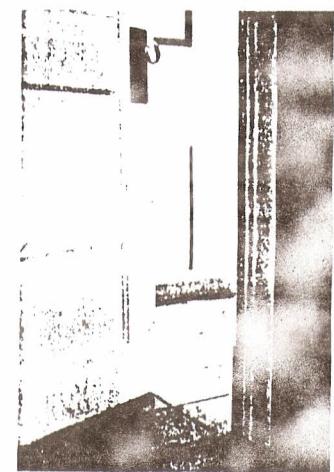
An assumption which is always imposed or always left out will lose its value as an assumption.

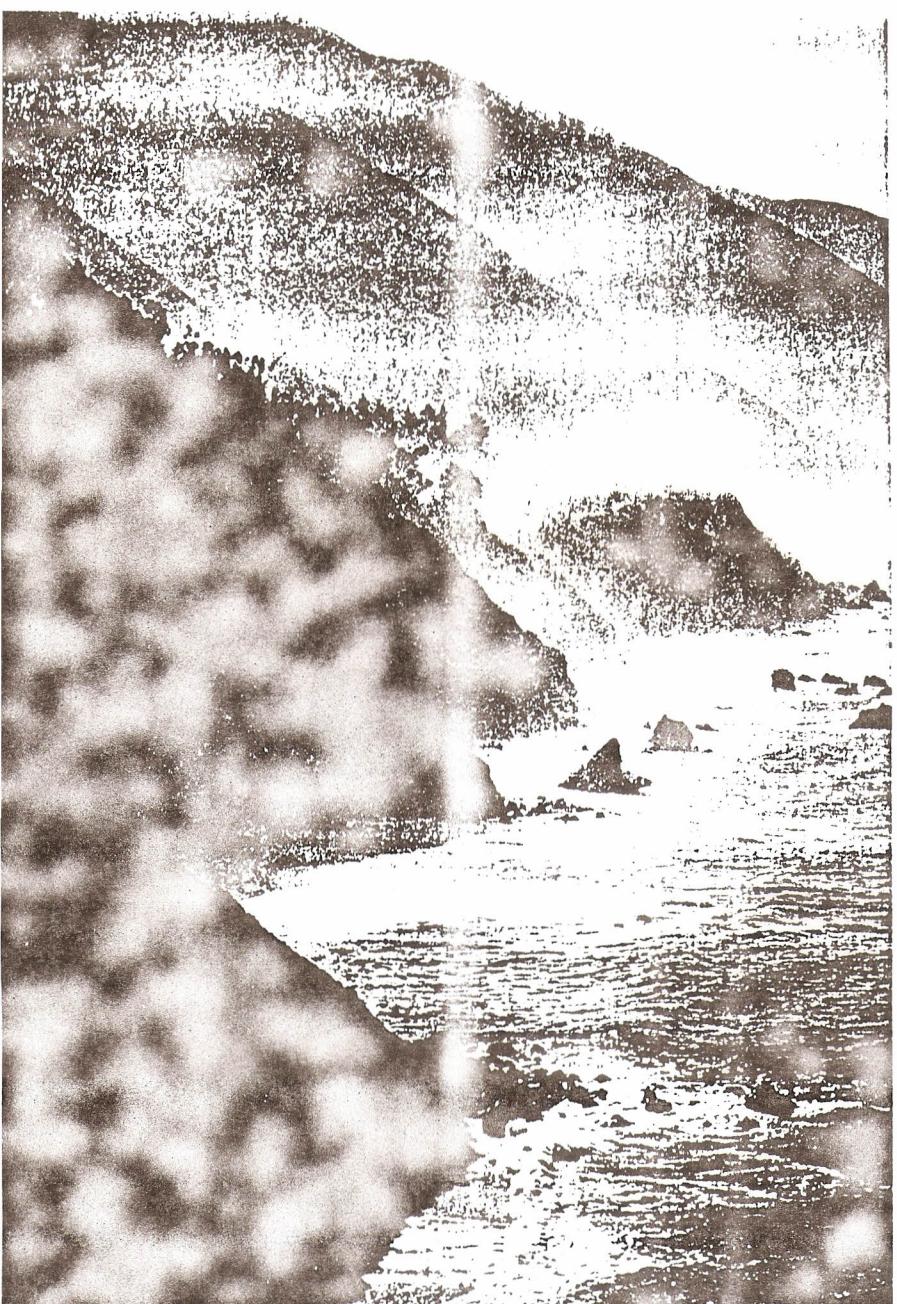
The alternating principle is simple: Sometimes we have to omit or change our combined assumptions so that we can create new ideas from different sets of assumptions.

It is easy to think of examples of how varying the combination of elements can create beneficial results. Chefs use this principle whenever they improve upon a dish by changing some of the flavors in it.

Another example: By combining 0 and 1 in different orders, mathematicians can create numerical systems and digital systems upon which electronic devices and computers are based.

Alternate all your assumptions about a particular set of problems to create an infinite number of good ideas.





Different combinations of the three primary colors (red, blue and yellow) can create an unlimited variety of colors and patterns. By alternating seven basic tones, one can compose an infinite number of songs.

Here's a business-based example of the door principle:

You may decide that a customer who complains a great deal about your company's products or services is a real pain. Your salesman may try to spend as little time with that customer as possible.

But instead of declaring, "A customer who complains is bad," change your assumption to this: "A customer who complains is good. In fact, that's the best kind of customer to have."

What happens when you act on that new assumption? For starters, if the complaining customer is to be considered a good customer, then you'd better start treating him like a good customer. Go out of your way to cater to his needs.

Treat him with particular deference. Listen carefully to those complaints that used to bother you — you'll probably pick up many tips on how to improve your products and services.

In other words, don't shy away from the customer who complains — embrace him. He'll tell you many things you need to know. Alternating your perception of the customer opens many new possibilities.

THE CONTRASTING AND COMPLEMENTING PRINCIPLE

This can be remembered as the *house principle*. A house offers barriers — a roof and walls against the weather — and also, contrasting with and complementing this quality, it has open space within.

Our lives are filled with ideas that contrast and complement each other.

Knowing and not knowing. Existence and nonexistence. Good and bad. Male and female. Old and young.

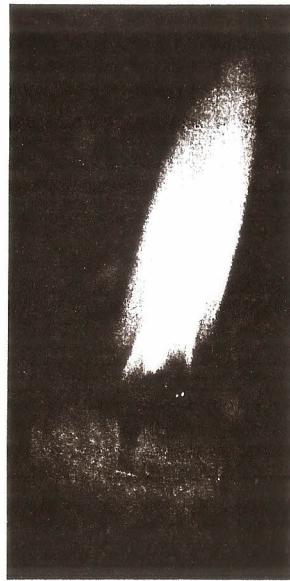
The list could go on indefinitely.

This is the paradox of knowledge. The wise person understands how little he or she knows. When we really open up our minds we understand that if we aren't aware of how much we don't know, we don't really know anything. We realize that if we don't know evil, we can't recognize good. If we haven't experienced sadness, we cannot truly experience joy.

What we see as existing contrasts with what is nonexistent. Meditate on this principle in peace for at least 15 minutes to explore the nonexistent and refresh your HD with insight. Listen to what you don't hear and see what you don't see.

*Why is the ocean king of a hundred rivers?
Because it lies below them.
Therefore it is king of a hundred rivers.*

— Lao Tzu



To light a candle is to cast a shadow.

Without the known, the unknown is hard to define; without knowing the unknown, the known is not truly known.

Even what we see as existing can be contrasted with that which doesn't exist, and these two things complement each other in their functions. The ancient proverb says, "To light a candle is to cast a shadow."

Here's a pragmatic example. Take the room you now occupy. The walls, floor and ceiling that surround you are useless if not for the empty or "nonexistent" space that fills them. If the room was filled with concrete and had no open space, it would be useless as a room.

As it is, the walls, ceiling and floor provide protection and definition for the nonexistent space; yet it is the nonexistent space that makes the room useful.

Learn to look beyond just one element of the equation. Whenever you deal with a new event or idea, try to recognize also the corresponding contrasting and complementing events and ideas.

THE REVOLVING AND CYCLING PRINCIPLE

This principle can be remembered as ***falling flower seeds***. When a flower fades in the autumn and falls to the ground, it carries with it the seeds for renewal in the following spring.

Every living thing is born to grow, reach a peak and die. This is the natural ***Revolving and Cycling Principle*** of biological organisms.

The earth itself experiences the revolving and cycling of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter.

Even corporations go through life cycles consisting of ups and downs. A new product is established and sales accelerate. Later sales stabilize and, in time, decrease in the face of competition and newer products.

All people undergo cycles in their professional lives, in the state of their bodies and in their emotional makeup.

It's only natural. In fact, if you encounter someone who is always depressingly down or always giddily up, it's a sure sign that there's something wrong with that person's mental and emotional makeup.

An awareness of the Revolving and Cycling Principle can be useful in a variety of ways. For example, before beginning

negotiations with a company, it would be useful to understand the cyclical nature of that firm's business and which phase of that cycle the firm now occupies.

If you make a proposal to someone and it is refused, don't give up hope. It's possible that the individual was in a particular low phase of his own internal cycle that leads him to reject new ideas. Wait a while and try again — you may catch him in a "high" state.

Lives and fortunes go in cycles, too. When you seem to be at the bottom, it means you're due to begin rising once again to the top. Just as each success contains the seeds of failure, so each failure contains the seeds of success.

The great inventor Thomas Edison was once asked by a reporter if he never became discouraged by his many initial failures to perfect a light bulb. Edison replied: "I have never failed. I merely discovered many methods for not creating an electric bulb."

THE INNER CONNECTION PRINCIPLE

This is the ***blood is thicker than water principle***. It means, simply, that a close connection will be honored over simple acquaintance.

You may have heard the old saying about never judging another person until you've walked a mile in their shoes.

The thought behind the adage is also the basis of the ***Inner Connection Principle***. The idea is to build as many strong channels as possible connecting us to the inner core of another individual's habitual domain. The process is often called "bonding." When this occurs, you will be able to strongly identify with that individual and be better able to predict his behavior and influence him.

Politicians tend to be extremely good at building these inner connections. If you ever attend a political rally, watch the activities of the candidates. They will recognize individuals in the crowd and make gestures or comments to show that they are aware of the presence of those "special" people. Those individuals are gratified; they feel they have an inner connection with someone as important as a governor, senator or president.

Effective politicians really work at building this connection. They know the key to their election is to make many

Life is like a roller coaster and we all experience the ups and downs of its cycles. Look for the cycles in your daily, weekly, monthly and yearly life to learn more about yourself and your environment. Look for the seeds of failure in every success and the seeds of success in every failure. When can you use this principle next?

Who are your closest friends? Remember when you first met and developed your foundation of friendship, what steps or stages you went through. How did you learn about each other?

Think about yesterday.
Imagine how everyone with
whom you came in contact
might affect your life.

other people feel like a vital part of their cause.

This principle has numerous business applications. For example, how do you build connections with your customers? It's obvious: You try to put yourself in their shoes, to understand what they need, to sense how they feel about your product or service. For one corporation to understand and affect another requires understanding the core habitual domain of the organization and the ability to build up as many strong connections as possible.

People with good instincts and common sense may constantly be forging inner connections with others without even realizing it. The referral system, alumni organizations, clubs, trade associations can all be useful channels for connections. Making inner connections is the real goal of what is sometimes called "networking."

THE CHANGING AND TRANSFORMING PRINCIPLE

This is the ***ice and steam principle***. The world is constantly changing, and so are the habitual domains of the individuals and organizations that inhabit it. They change when circumstances (or parameters) make them.

Water will transform into steam or ice when its temperature (a parameter) is drastically changed. Indeed, when relative parameters change drastically in many realms — not just in nature — new things, substances or forms will emerge.

Suppose a friend's income doubles overnight. Or is cut in half. Can you envision how his lifestyle, his personality, his habitual domain will change?

A small shop that grows to be a large corporation not only undergoes change in the amount of business it handles, but in its organizational structure. A business with thousands of employees has different needs from one with a dozen or so workers.

A person who has been in the same job for years and believes he knows all there is to know about it could find himself being pushed aside by someone coming with new and fresh ideas.

Businesses that are willing to change are businesses with a better chance of surviving.

Take as an example the direct sales company which for

years had opened every day at 8 a.m. and closed at 6 p.m. But a new CEO had an idea for improving customer service and increasing sales. He offered special incentives to phone order operators who would come in an hour early or work an hour later.

The CEO realized that many of the company's customers might prefer to place their orders before going to work in the morning or after coming home in the afternoon. By expanding the hours of operation, the company sold more and kept customers happier.

People who are willing to change are people with a better chance for happiness and success. We must all be on the alert for changes and their implications and be willing to change ourselves. If we do not, we will never tap our potential.

CONTRADICTION PRINCIPLE

This is the ***stand on your head principle***. Sometimes it is worth seeing the world upside down, or at least from a different angle; it can clear your mind.

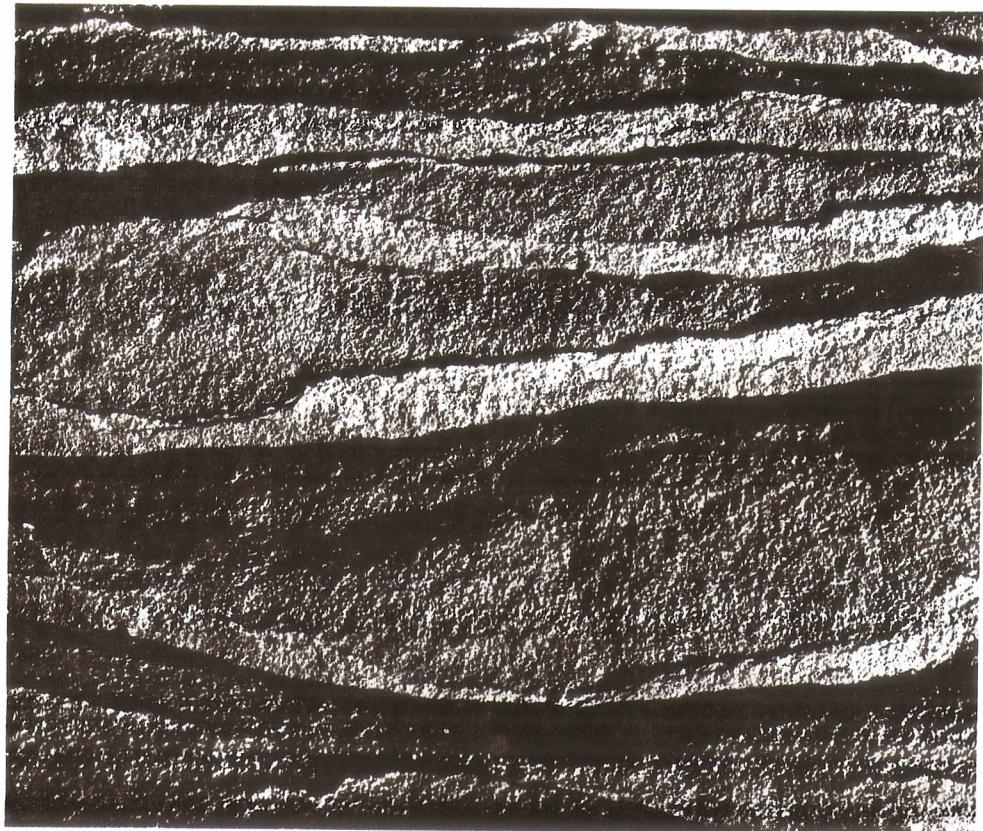
To use the ***Contradiction Principle*** we need to look at an event from the other way around. We must find out if there is an event or information that contradicts our conclusions. If there is, then we must revise our assumptions or change our conclusions.

This can work two ways. One is to take a different perspective to a problem or challenge. The phrase "thinking outside the box" refers to this approach, which is a mainstay for artists, designers, writers, advertising executives and others in "creative" businesses.

Applying the Contradiction Principle to our daily thinking can sharpen our perceptions to observe greater detail and can enrich our thought processes. Some of the best tools for creative thinking involve using contradictions, saying "what if" to the ordinary.

Using contradiction effectively can also mean taking a second look, examining events, processes, relationships more closely. Maybe your company expects to buy a product for a particular price, then discovers the price is much more. This contradiction between expectation and reality causes you to look for other vendors — and to expand your habitual domain in the process.

Can you name someone who has greatly changed or expanded his or her habitual domain in the last few years?



THE CRACKING AND RIPPING PRINCIPLE

This is the **broken teacup principle**. A teacup may have a hairline crack that is not even visible as the cup sits on the shelf. But when you pour hot water into it, the cup will leak, or even shatter.

Cracks are the weak point of any structure. If you want to destroy a mighty fortress, you can do so by working on its crack lines and ripping them open.

If you would save the fortress, you must repair and fill up the cracks.

A habitual domain consists of a series of subsystems. Conflicts and inconsistencies among these subsystems are inevitable. In business, if you want to break the habitual domain of a competitor, you must observe carefully and determine where the cracks — the inconsistencies and conflicts — exist. Then you must decide what can be done to break open those cracks.

At the same time you should be aware of the cracks in your own habitual domain. These cracks may need patching. Or, you may determine that your old habitual domain needs breaking down and rebuilding (just as the "desktop" on your computer may need rebuilding occasionally).

In our personal habitual domains, these cracks can be old fears, inflexible modes of thinking, grudges or any other "habits" that keep us from positive change and growth. Whenever you find yourself justifying a thought or behavior with the premise that you have "always done it this way," it may be time to see if that behavior represents a crack in your habitual domain.

Here's an example of **Cracking and Ripping** in business. Let's say your company sells computers. Another company sells computers as well. But you discover that the competition has a cracking line: While they sell good computers at a reasonable price, they are not very good about servicing the units already sold.

That's where you attack your competition — by making sure that your after-sales service is the best possible. You've identified the cracking line. Now you can rip them apart.

Of course, if the competition is smart they'll be looking for the cracks in *your* operation. It's up to you to do some self-analysis and discover the weak points before they do.

Make a list of ideas that have become habituated over time in your HD. These ideas might be the value of one political party over another, the need for business clothing at the office, the value of spring cleaning, the need to go to your mother-in-law's for dinner every Sunday. Step back from each of the ideas on your list and examine their relevance to your situation today.

Your habitual domain is like the earth — strong but full of seams where new layers have been added.

THE VOID PRINCIPLE

This might be called the ***empty space principle***. We all tend to think in terms of our own habitual domains, and we tend to think that anything outside our own habitual domains doesn't really exist.

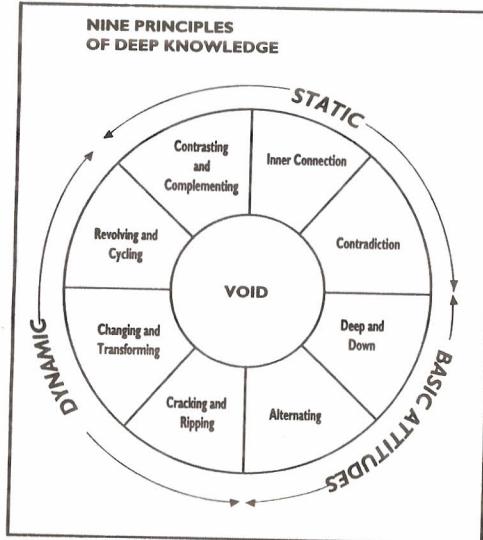
Rather than being on the hunt for new ideas and concepts, we find it's more convenient and easier to use the same sets of concepts over and over throughout our lives. Our habitual domains are self-perpetuating in this way.

The **Void Principle** simply states that the outside of our habitual domains is not empty. Just because we don't perceive it or recognize it doesn't mean it isn't there. And whether we acknowledge it or not, those other HDs can have a profound effect on us.

When an event occurs outside the comprehension of their habitual domains, individuals who see everything outside themselves as a void become bewildered. They cannot respond effectively.

To avoid becoming confused or defensive (and thus miss out on useful or desirable ideas), we need to expand our habitual domains continuously by absorbing what we can of others'. We must regularly let go of some of our own habitual domains so as to empty them of prejudices and make them capable of absorbing new habitual domains. If you apply the Void Principle in the sense that you make a void, or empty place, in your domains, then you can use another of the principles for deep knowledge to fill that void with new information.

For example, perhaps you have a problem at work that you cannot seem to solve alone. You empty out of your habitual domain the idea that you must solve the problem yourself in order to show your competence. You use the Deep and Down Principle's lessons about humility and you approach a co-worker for help and advice. Together you find a solution. You have now not only solved your problem, you have a habitual domain that has broadened to include the new idea that



When you are trying to reach a deeper level of knowledge, apply the void principle first, letting go of your preconceived ideas and emptying your mind. Then use other principles to fill the void with new information. Consider principles related to your basic attitudes, but also principles that are static and dynamic by nature.

competence can mean asking for help at the right time.

When our habitual domain is capable of identifying with the HDs of every other person and organization on earth, we'll have reached a true "void" state in which nothing is unknown to us, yet we know what is unknown to others. This state of enlightenment has been the goal of many spiritual thinkers throughout history. For most humans, it can never be reached. But as a goal, it has infinite value to help us grow and expand our capabilities to understand.

In a less cosmic way, Napoleon's career shows an example of the void principle. He thought himself such a superior military strategist that he refused to even consider the existence of the habitual domain of his opposing generals until it was too late.

A wise general likes to attack outside his enemy's HD. The bewilderment of the enemy provides the window of opportunity for victory.

Alinsky's Strategy in Chicago

A terrific example of the Void Principle occurred when social activist Saul Alinsky was asked to help the black community of Chicago solve a problem. In 1960 African Americans living in Chicago had little political power and were subject to discriminatory treatment in just about every aspect of their lives.

Leaders of the black community invited Alinsky, who was to become famous for his "blockbusting" method of integrating neighborhoods, to participate in their effort.

Alinsky clearly was aware of deep knowledge principles. Working with black leaders he came up with a strategy so alien to city leaders that they would be powerless to anticipate it.

His plan was simple, legal and incredibly effective: Several hundred African Americans would continuously occupy every public restroom in Chicago's massive O'Hare Airport.

At first glance that might seem like nothing more than an inconvenience. But consider: Thousands of individuals visit the airport daily, many of them visitors to Chicago. With every restroom occupied continuously, there would be no place for all these persons to relieve themselves.

Under these circumstances, children probably would be

Think of some inventions and advances in science, medicine, engineering, art that have been the result of HD expansions by individuals and have contributed to HD expansions of others. Imagine a world in which there is no HD expansion.



the first to find release wherever they could. Adults would eventually be forced to follow.

Within hours O'Hare would smell terrible and become virtually unusable. Chicago would achieve instant notoriety around the world.

As it turned out, the plan never was put into operation. City leaders found out about Alinsky's strategy and, realizing their inability to prevent its implementation and its potential for damaging the city's reputation, met with black leaders and promised to fulfill several of their key demands.

Alinsky understood that Chicago's municipal government wasn't prepared to think of public restrooms as a battleground for racial equality. The plan was beyond the comprehension of their habitual domain.



Ancient Chinese wisdom reminds us that the usefulness of a wheel comes not only from the spokes but from the spaces between them. Much of your strength also comes from the "empty" places, the ideas not yet fully formed, that will permit your domain room to grow.